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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

5   1.   A method for processing a transaction in electronic commerce, the method comprising:

receiving a transaction message from a seller, wherein the transaction message comprises a description of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a

10   seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

creating a transaction tag to be associated with the goods during the transaction, wherein the transaction tag uniquely identifies the goods in the transaction;

sending the transaction tag to the seller;

15   receiving, from the seller, a digital image to be associated with the transaction, wherein the digital image comprises an image of the goods on which the transaction tag has been attached, the transaction tag being visible within the digital image; and

20   sending the digital image to one or more viewers.

2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:

accepting a bid from the buyer for the goods; and

notifying the seller that the bid from the buyer is

25   a winning bid in an online auction.

3.   The method of claim 2 further comprising:

notifying the buyer that the bid from the buyer is the winning bid in the online auction; and

30   in response to accepting payment for the goods from the buyer, notifying the seller of payment for the goods;

holding the payment in escrow.

4.   The method of claim 3 further comprising:
      receiving an acceptance message, wherein the
acceptance message indicates an acceptance of goods
5   received from the seller by the buyer; and
      releasing payment for the goods to the seller.

5.   The method of claim 3 further comprising:
      receiving a rejection message, wherein the rejection
10   message indicates a rejection of goods received from the
seller by the buyer; and
      returning payment for the goods to the buyer.

6.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:
15   generating a transaction identifier for the
transaction, wherein the transaction identifier provides
an association between the transaction and electronic
communication regarding the transaction.

20   7.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:
      generating encrypted information to be included on
the transaction tag.

8.   The method of claim 1 wherein the step of sending
25   the transaction tag to the seller further comprises:
      creating a physical transaction tag; and
      mailing the physical transaction tag to the seller.

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9.   The method of claim 1 wherein the step of sending the transaction tag to the seller further comprises:

storing the transaction tag in an electronic document; and

5   electronically delivering the electronic document containing the transaction tag to the seller.

10.   A method for processing a transaction in electronic commerce, the method comprising:

10   generating a transaction message, wherein the transaction message comprises a description of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

sending the transaction message to an online sales

15   service that facilitates a purchase transaction between the buyer and the seller;

receiving a transaction tag to be associated with the goods during the transaction from the online sales service, wherein the transaction tag uniquely identifies

20   the goods in the transaction;

generating a digital image to be associated with the transaction, wherein the digital image comprises an image of the goods on which the transaction tag has been attached, the transaction tag being visible within the

25   digital image; and

sending the digital image to the online sales service.

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11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:

    receiving a transaction identifier for the transaction, wherein the transaction identifier provides

5 an association between the transaction and electronic communication regarding the transaction.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of receiving the transaction tag further comprises:

10   printing a physical transaction tag.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of receiving the transaction tag further comprises:

    electronically receiving the transaction tag in an

15 electronic document; and

       printing a physical transaction tag.

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14. An apparatus for processing a transaction in electronic commerce, the apparatus comprising:

first receiving means for receiving a transaction message from a seller, wherein the transaction message

5   comprises a description of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

creating means for creating a transaction tag to be associated with the goods during the transaction, wherein

10   the transaction tag uniquely identifies the goods in the transaction;

first sending means for sending the transaction tag to the seller;

second receiving means for receiving, from the

15   seller, a digital image to be associated with the transaction, wherein the digital image comprises an image of the goods on which the transaction tag has been attached, the transaction tag being visible within the digital image; and

20   second sending means for sending the digital image to one or more viewers.

15. The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising:

accepting means for accepting a bid from the buyer

25   for the goods; and

first notifying means for notifying the seller that the bid from the buyer is a winning bid in an online auction.

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16. The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising:

second notifying means for notifying the buyer that the bid from the buyer is the winning bid in the online auction; and

third notifying means for notifying, in response to accepting payment for the goods from the buyer, the seller of payment for the goods;

holding means for holding the payment in escrow.

17. The apparatus of claim 16 further comprising:

third receiving means for receiving an acceptance message, wherein the acceptance message indicates an acceptance of goods received from the seller by the buyer; and

releasing means for releasing payment for the goods to the seller.

18. The apparatus of claim 16 further comprising:

fourth receiving means for receiving a rejection message, wherein the rejection message indicates a rejection of goods received from the seller by the buyer; and

returning means for returning payment for the goods to the buyer.

19. The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising:

first generating means for generating a transaction identifier for the transaction, wherein the transaction identifier provides an association between the transaction and electronic communication regarding the transaction.

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20. The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising:

second generating means for generating encrypted information to be included on the transaction tag.

5   21. The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first sending means further comprises:

creating means for creating a physical transaction tag; and

mailing means for mailing the physical transaction

10   tag to the seller.

22. The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first sending means further comprises:

storing means for storing the transaction tag in an

15   electronic document; and

delivering means for electronically delivering the electronic document containing the transaction tag to the seller.

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23. An apparatus for processing a transaction in electronic commerce, the apparatus comprising:

first generating means for generating a transaction message, wherein the transaction message comprises a

5   description of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

first sending means for sending the transaction message to an online sales service that facilitates a

10   purchase transaction between the buyer and the seller;

first receiving means for receiving a transaction tag to be associated with the goods during the transaction from the online sales service, wherein the transaction tag uniquely identifies the goods in the

15   transaction;

second generating means for generating a digital image to be associated with the transaction, wherein the digital image comprises an image of the goods on which the transaction tag has been attached, the transaction

20   tag being visible within the digital image; and

second sending means for sending the digital image to the online sales service.

24. The apparatus of claim 23 further comprising:

25   second receiving means for receiving a transaction identifier for the transaction, wherein the transaction identifier provides an association between the transaction and electronic communication regarding the transaction.

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25. The apparatus of claim 23 further comprising:

first printing means for printing a physical
transaction tag.

5   26. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the first
receiving means further comprises:

third receiving means for electronically receiving
the transaction tag in an electronic document; and

second printing means for printing a physical
10   transaction tag.

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27. A computer program product on a computer readable medium for use in a data processing system for processing a transaction in electronic commerce, the computer program product comprising:

5   instructions for receiving a transaction message from a seller, wherein the transaction message comprises a description of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

10   instructions for creating a transaction tag to be associated with the goods during the transaction, wherein the transaction tag uniquely identifies the goods in the transaction;

      instructions for sending the transaction tag to the

15 seller;

      instructions for receiving, from the seller, a digital image to be associated with the transaction, wherein the digital image comprises an image of the goods on which the transaction tag has been attached, the

20 transaction tag being visible within the digital image; and

      instructions for sending the digital image to one or more viewers.

25   28. The computer program product of claim 27 further comprising:

      instructions for accepting a bid from the buyer for the goods; and

      instructions for notifying the seller that the bid

30 from the buyer is a winning bid in an online auction.

29. The computer program product of claim 28 further comprising:

instructions for notifying the buyer that the bid from the buyer is the winning bid in the online auction; and

instructions for notifying the seller of payment for the goods in response to accepting payment for the goods from the buyer;

instructions for holding the payment in escrow.

30. The computer program product of claim 29 further comprising:

instructions for receiving an acceptance message, wherein the acceptance message indicates an acceptance of goods received from the seller by the buyer; and

instructions for releasing payment for the goods to the seller.

31. The computer program product of claim 29 further comprising:

instructions for receiving a rejection message, wherein the rejection message indicates a rejection of goods received from the seller by the buyer; and

instructions for returning payment for the goods to the buyer.

32. The computer program product of claim 27 further comprising:

instructions for generating a transaction identifier for the transaction, wherein the transaction identifier provides an association between the transaction and electronic communication regarding the transaction.

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33. The computer program product of claim 27 further comprising:

   instructions for generating encrypted information to
5 be included on the transaction tag.

34. The computer program product of claim 27 wherein the instructions for sending the transaction tag to the seller further comprise:
10   instructions for creating a physical transaction tag; and
   instructions for mailing the physical transaction tag to the seller.

15 35. The computer program product of claim 27 wherein the instructions for sending the transaction tag to the seller further comprise:
   instructions for storing the transaction tag in an electronic document; and
20   instructions for electronically delivering the electronic document containing the transaction tag to the seller.

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36. A computer program product on a computer readable
medium for use in a data processing system for processing
a transaction in electronic commerce, the computer
program product comprising:

5   instructions for generating a transaction message,
wherein the transaction message comprises a description
of goods to be transferred during a transaction between a
seller of the goods and a buyer of the goods;

        instructions for sending the transaction message to
10   an online sales service that facilitates a purchase
transaction between the buyer and the seller;

        instructions for receiving a transaction tag to be
associated with the goods during the transaction from the
online sales service, wherein the transaction tag

15   uniquely identifies the goods in the transaction;

        instructions for generating a digital image to be
associated with the transaction, wherein the digital
image comprises an image of the goods on which the
transaction tag has been attached, the transaction tag

20   being visible within the digital image; and

        instructions for sending the digital image to the
online sales service.

37. The computer program product of claim 36 further

25   comprising:

        instructions for receiving a transaction identifier
for the transaction, wherein the transaction identifier
provides an association between the transaction and
electronic communication regarding the transaction.

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38.   The computer program product of claim 36 wherein the instructions for receiving the transaction tag further comprise:

      instructions for printing a physical transaction

5   tag.

39.   The computer program product of claim 36 wherein the instructions for receiving the transaction tag further comprise:

10   instructions for electronically receiving the transaction tag in an electronic document; and

      instructions for printing a physical transaction

      tag.

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